

that is that over the many years Wise sold Wrenn copies good and bad of one thing and another it was his unvarying practice whenever he had a worthless tract, poem, what have you, some anonymous piece or piece by some obscure writer, to assign that piece to a well known person—‘this is by Daniel Defoe, very rare’, ‘this is by Samuel Johnson’, ‘Alexander Pope’, always putting a big name on to a rather insignificant item, and thus of course charging 3 or 4 times what the item was worth. Wrenn accepted all of these on Wise’s sayso, never questioning anything Wise sent him, and Wise, knowing this, would send sometimes an anonymous piece labelled as by author ‘A’ and two years later send him the same piece now labelled as by author ‘B’. Wrenn never put 2 and 2 or should I say one and one together—he never made out cards, much less title cards—and so the continuing deception went entirely unnoticed. This practice was known generally later on, because as I remarked a little while ago Wise sponsored the issuance of the Wrenn Library catalogue in 1920 and thus we have for all the world to see these false descriptions, and I was repeatedly urged, particularly by Mr Pollard, to get to work on this business and find out just how far ranging it went. This I did and discovered that, making all allowances for Wise as far as one possibly could, there are no fewer than 869 books in the Wrenn Library that are falsely attributed, or something approaching one-sixth of the total. So no matter how you look at the Wrenn collection, whether for forgeries or for stolen leaves, or for misnamed copies, we have them all and we have them to such a vast extent that although I knew hardly anything about Wise when I came to Texas in 1958 I now estimate that if I did nothing but Wiseian work from here on now, it would take me all the rest of my declining years to fully appreciate his handiwork. I thank you.

W. B. Todd

In response to a question about the link between Maurice Buxton Forman and Wise Professor Todd reminded his audience that in 1934, immediately after the exposure, Forman was hovering about Wise, shielding him against rude questioning by distinguished visitors. As Pollard now says, they did interrogate Maurice Buxton Forman, particularly to discover if they could, if indeed his father Harry was involved; and as it is now reported, Maurice broke down in tears. He knew in some measure how far his father had been involved, but Maurice himself certainly could have had nothing to do with the forgeries. Like Gorfin he was much too young. When Fannie Ratchford tried to accuse Gorfin, along with Gosse, of being a conspirator, she forgot that he was only eight years old at the time these forgeries were being prepared in 1888 through 1906. Maurice Buxton Forman I think would also be hardly out of knee pants at the time the dirty